

America's Chances at the Olympic Games

BEFORE the month of August expires Europe will be interested in another world conflict. This clash will be bloodless and the battle stage is the new Olympic Stadium at Antwerp, Belgium. Thirty nations, including the United States, will participate in the competition known as the Olympic Games of 1920.

The last athletic contests of such international scope were held at Stockholm, Sweden, in 1912. Held every four years, the next Olympic Games were scheduled to take place in Berlin, Germany, in 1916, but a world war interfered and a lapse of eight years between the last competition and the present was made necessary.

Germany and the other nations comprising what were known as the Central Powers during the war are barred from participation in the coming games. Russia will not send a team because of conditions. Thus, several of the strongest powers, nations that figured heavily in the scoring previously, will be missing this year but despite the absence of these colors from the Stadium at Antwerp the entry list is larger than at any previous games and more nations are represented.

The United States will be what is known as "top favorite" in sporting and athletic circles. The previous performances of American athletes, and a study of the records made in the various college and club track and field meets in the States this year, present conclusive evidence that the American contingent will enter the Stadium with more speed, power and agility than any other country can boast of its representatives.

The United States will, in a way, compete against itself, for among the opposing athletes will be a large number prepared by American coaches. After the armistice was signed and when Europe settled back to a peace basis, several continental countries engaged the best American athletic instructors procurable to prepare their athletes for the competition at Antwerp. This plan has achieved wonderful results and, although countries which otherwise would have shown very poorly in the Stadium against American competition will do much better because of American coaching, there is a question whether they have acquired enough knowledge of track and field athletics in the comparatively short time allotted for preparation to overcome the preponderating strength of the evenly balanced American team which, in the matter of even division of strength, is by far the best representative athletic team the United States has ever sent into Olympic competition. In the American squad are 108 track and field athletes, 48 swimmers, 24 wrestlers, 22 boxers, 20 fencers and eight bicycle riders, or cyclists. The idea is to give America a sound opportunity to gain full Olympic championship. At previous competition the Olympic promoters included so many sports in their games that are either neglected or not recognized in this country, that there was an opportunity to dispute America's claims although America was by far the biggest winner in standard athletic events.

The Olympic Games will result in much editorial comment in the newspapers. There will be lengthy discussions regarding their value. You will find those that will point to the competition now taking place on Belgium soil as time wasted, money wasted and the future of the youth of the land undermined in placing too high value on athletic supremacy. It is not our aim to enter into a discussion in this article relative to the merits or demerits of international competition on such a scope as the Olympic Games present. It is of the teams and the athletes that we are writing. The argument carries two sides and the first answer goes to the ancient advice of beating swords into plowshares and all work and no play makes Johnny dull.

Returning to the discussion of the actual chances of the American team, tradition will count heavily in favor of the Yankee athletes. At Athens, at London, at Stockholm the Stars and Stripes were rarely ever missing from the flagpole in the Stadium when the event was concluded. The American track and field athletes, as a team, were unbeatable. Here and there was a weak link; now and then another country, like Finland in the distance events, produced a faster or stronger man, but on the whole the United States was supreme.

The names of our Olympic heroes survive the years that have gone by. Who has not heard of Jim Thorpe? This Sach and Fox Indian was the individual star of the Olympic Games of Stockholm in 1912. And it was a peculiar feature of America's success that her greatest athlete was a genuine American.

Even before the American athletes left New York on the transport Princess Matoika, cable messages were received from Antwerp that America had won her first victory in the Olympic Games. Her trapshooters took the first five places in the clay bird competition. Mark Airie, of Champaign, Illinois, a noted American shot, broke 95 out of 100; next came Frank M. Troeh, of Vancouver, Washington, with 93 out of 100, while Horace Bonser, of Cincinnati, Ohio, Frank S. Wright, of Buffalo, New York, and Fred Plum, of Atlantic City, were tied for third place with 87 each. Airie gained the title of Olympic Trapshooting Champion.

America took second place in the Olympic hockey competition, held late last spring. Now she has the trapshooting honors. In polo competition the United States was beaten but her representative four consisted of army men who were on European soil. It was not a team picked from the men who play polo in this country and who are members of the crack teams.

It is not to be expected that the United States will make a clean sweep of the track and field events. America will probably take more than one-half of the runs and better than one-half of the field events. The dashes should find the United States on top while in the longer distance races it is quite probable that Americans will lose to the Finns or Englishmen. Sweden also appears to be unusually strong for the longer races. There is little hope of America winning the decathlon and the pentathlon, for on this invasion we lack another "all-arounder" of the prowess of the aforementioned Indian, Jim Thorpe. Also, our javelin and discus performers will probably not measure up with



MISS ETHELDA BLEIBTREY, U. S. Swimming Champion.

Europe's best. These predictions may go wrong and America may lose some events where she appears unbeatable. The predictions are based on a comparison of the latest records available and the reports of foreign correspondents and coaches.

The Americans have one advantage and that is experience. In the squad that carries the Stars and Stripes are some seasoned track and field performers, men who have been in athletic competition for years, men who know all the tricks of the game and who know how to take advantage of the opportunities or "breaks," to use the sporting term. You meet up with "breaks" in track and field competition just as you do in baseball, football, tennis, golf and other games. It is true that many of the American representatives are youngsters, boys and girls who have gained athletic prestige only quite recently and there is always serious speculation what a novice will do under competition so strenuous as that offered in the Olympic Games. There is where the balance of the American team asserts its advantages, for the presence of the established athletes, old in an athletic way, will steady the younger performance and temper them. Also, the Americans are under one of the greatest coaches America has known, Jack Moakley, veteran Cornell trainer. He has replaced the picturesque Mike Murphy, famous trainer of the University of Pennsylvania, who led the Americans on their last invasion. Moakley's athletes have kept the Cornell colors high in intercollegiate athletic competition for years and he has the uncanny ability to make young men do the "impossible" on track and field.

These athletes were picked from coast to coast and from border to border. They are representative. Some will say that the Olympic Committee made mistakes in picking some of the men, leaving athletes who could show better in that particular event at home. Un-

doubtedly some mistakes were made but, taken all in all, the team is strong with a great deal of balance.

America would consider herself defeated if she did not outscore all other nations in the track and field events. These numbers on the Olympic program are all the United States considers worth while and so we may dwell briefly on the men America depends upon and their chances of success.

The United States won both dash events, the 100 and 200-meter sprints, at Stockholm. Ralph Craig, formerly of the University of Michigan, captured both. There is every chance of a repetition of this Yankee success this year although it is doubtful if one man will turn the trick in both races. America has a "rock" of good sprinters. In the 100-meter dash her best two performers are Loren Murchison and Jack Scholz. Both have covered 100 yards in less than 10 seconds but 100 meters is a bit farther to travel. There are other good men for this event but Murchison and Scholz, on past performances, appear to have a slight edge and of the two Murchison is favored to win.

In the 200-meter sprint the United States has Charlie Paddock, the coast sensation. If any American can take both sprints Paddock is the man. He is best, though, at the 200-meter distance for he strikes his full speed rather late. Probably no athlete that ever lived has such a burst of speed in the last 50 yards of a 220-yard race as Paddock. He should win the 200-meter event easily and he may surprise his countrymen and beat both Murchison and Scholz in the "century." In the "200" it is not unlikely that Paddock will be followed across the finish line by three Americans, as there is no foreign sprinter coming close to him at this distance.

Americans are not optimistic about the 400-meter race. In this event South Africa threatens to win with the sensational Rudd, the runner who landed the relay championship for England, at Philadelphia, last spring. England has Butler, of Cambridge, probably the best on the British Isles, or on the European continent for that matter.

This "400" race will present Ted Meredith who, while running under the colors of the University of Pennsylvania, was supreme at 440 yards. Later he retired and promised never to race again but the lure of Olympic competition brought him back to the cinder paths and he showed much of his former speed in the trials conducted on American soil this summer. Meredith will probably go down as the greatest comeback in the historic Olympic competition whether he wins or loses at Antwerp.

Besides Meredith, the United States will have Frank Shea, of Pittsburgh, running under the Navy colors. He has done some unusually fast work in this country and should perform creditably at Antwerp but the main hope of America in the "400" lies in Meredith and his famous burst of speed at the finish where he literally throws his body over the tape.

In the 800-meter run America again has to contend with Rudd, the South African. Here, however, Rudd will find the going stiff and spirited. He has against him Earl Eby, of Chicago, an athlete who has been in much hard competition, a finished performer and a runner who should be able to do the distance in 1:53 if pressed hard. He has repeatedly done better than 1:55.

Eby will not be alone in the 800-meter run, for Don Scott, formerly of the University of Mississippi, will be in there and this second entry gives America a keen advantage. Scott, a rugged and courageous runner, is a "front field" performer. He goes into the lead with the crack of the pistol, makes the pace all the way and finishes the best he can. Eby has never been a pacemaker, his plan of running keeping him in second or third place until near the finish when he uses the speed he has been saving for a final spurt. With Eby to hang on to the flying Scott it will be difficult to better the advantage this combination presents.

There is also a chance that Joie Ray, the tall Chicagoan who takes such long steps, will start in the "800." Ray is a miler and supreme at the distance, but he can also run the half mile with the best of them. If he starts it will give the United States a great trio.

America is first choice in the 1,500-meter run. This is not fully a mile and will offer an opportunity for the American milers.

Ray, naturally, is the outstanding hope in this event. He should have able assistance from Connolly, the Boston miler, Curtis of the Navy and Larry Shields, of Philadelphia. Exercising teamwork this quartet should prove unbeatable. The one danger, in this event as well as in other distance races, is of the Americans racing each other. This they did at Stockholm and while they were making it a race of American against American, Jackson, of England, who had not been considered as a serious contender, slipped through and won the race. England will have two able runners in the 1,500-meter run at Antwerp but if Ray goes out at the start, instead of holding back, and if he receives the support of his mates, the event should be a victory for the Americans.

The United States will be lucky to place in the 5,000 and 10,000-meter races. We are lacking in these events due to their absence from programs at athletic meets. We simply have not developed specialists at the distances mentioned while the European countries have. England, Scotland, Finland, Sweden and France all will have men in these races who have made better time than the pick of American contenders, Brown, Furnas, Faller, Dresser, Simmons and Watson.

In the short hurdle events victory is generally conceded to Earl Thomson, who will wear the maple leaf of Canada. Although Thomson gained his reputation as a hurdler while competing for Dartmouth, an American institution and on American soil, he cannot run under the Stars and Stripes at Antwerp as he is a Canadian. Thomson is the greatest hurdler developed in years. He is a combination of runner and jumper, topping the timber without breaking his stride. He has used only American methods in preparation.